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Curios and Relics

Railsplitting Curios

Wedge

Owned by Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN RAIL-SPLITTING WEDGE NOW IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.

[Copyright, 1896, by W. R. Hearst.]



An interesting relic of Abraham Lincoln's pioneer days in southern Illinois has recently come to light in Berkeley. It is an iron wedge, or gad, very similar to those used to-day by woodchoppers in California lumbering districts in dealing with refractory logs and stumps. It was found some years since beneath a house in New Salem, Ill., where Lincoln had once lodged. This valuable memento of the martyr President is owned by Henry W. Allen, formerly of Illinois, but now a resident of Berkeley. He has a number of affidavits certifying to the authenticity of the relic. The owner is extremely proud of his treasure, and recently had it photographed, and the representation here given is now published for the first time.—[San Francisco Examiner.]



Have Wedge Used by the "Railsplitter"

The United States national museum at Washington has just received and put on exhibition in the historical collections an iron wedge, used for splitting wood and rails, which belonged to Abraham Lincoln and has cut into its surface the initials "A. L." This interesting personal relic of Lincoln was presented to the Smithsonian Institution by Henry W. Allen of California, through Representative John A. Elston of California, a regent of the institution.

The wedge was found in 1885 during some repairs being made on a brick house near New Salem, Menard County, Illinois, formerly owned and occupied by Mentor Graham, who was Abraham Lincoln's instructor in surveying. In presenting the relic to the Smithsonian, Mr. Allen included with it a number of papers of authentication, among them affidavits by Joseph Arnold and John Arnold verifying the finding of the wedge in the Graham house, and affidavits by Lizzie H. Bell and John Q. Spears as to the positive identification of the object as the one known by them to have belonged to Lincoln.

Some interesting facts regarding the

initials cut in the surface of the wedge are given in the affidavit of Mr. John Q. Spears, dated 1887. He says: "I distinctly recollect an occasion when I was in the blacksmith shop of one Joshua Miller of the village of New Salem aforesaid, when Mr. Lincoln came into said blacksmith shop, and after some conversation asked Mr. Miller to cut his (Lincoln's) initials in an iron wedge which he, Lincoln, then held in his hand, to which Mr. Miller replied he could not do it, as he was no scholar. Thereupon Mr. Lincoln said to said Miller: 'Let me have your hammer and cold chisel and I will cut them myself.' Thereupon the aforesaid Miller gave to Mr. Lincoln the cold chisel and hammer and I stood by and saw Mr. Lincoln, with said hammer and cold chisel, cut and make the letters 'A. L.' upon said iron wedge. These facts * * * are vividly impressed upon my memory."

Kansas City Star 12-26-20



Feb 12 - 18 21
St. Paul Pioneer Press

A RELIC OF LINCOLN

(Denver Rocky Mountain News.)

The iron wedge that Abraham Lincoln used in splitting wood and rails during his early manhood has come into the possession of the National Museum at Washington and has been placed among its treasured relics. It was found in 1885 during some repairs on a brick house near New Salem, Ill., formerly owned and occupied by Mentor Graham, Lincoln's instructor in surveying. It is amply identified and papers of authentication have been presented to the museum along with the relic. The wedge bears the initials "A. L." cut in the iron, and old neighbors, living at the time of the discovery, testified to its ownership, the maker of one affidavit stating that he saw Lincoln cut the initials. He was in a blacksmith shop in New Salem and asked the blacksmith to cut the letters, but the latter demurred, saying he was "no scholar." Lincoln then took the hammer and cold chisel and cut them himself.

There may be those who do not see the interest that attaches to this relic, but it is an article that beyond almost anything else marks in a material way the toilsome and humble beginning of a career that ended in a glory attained by few among the sons of men. Other and many relics of Abraham Lincoln's life yet exist—the cabin where he was born, the houses in which he lived later, his manuscripts and his words of wisdom in printed form; but houses decay and documents burn. His fame will live as long as the written history and the memory of man continue, but as centuries go on he will become to an extent mythical, in a sense almost deified.

Even now he stands apart as so great a figure that to many he seems invested with attributes that lift him out of the realm of the common man, as a saint ceases to be in touch with humanity. But he was of the common men, as well as of the great of earth, and this simple tool with which he worked will testify in ages to come as nothing else can do of the path in which he walked to greatness. People of a far future will look at it in wonder. It is a relic which should be treasured.



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WEDGE WAS USED BY LINCOLN

Relic Now in National Museum at
Washington Found Near New
Salem in Year 1885.

1885
An iron wedge that Lincoln used in splitting wood and rails was found in 1885 during some repairs on a brick house near New Salem, Ill., formerly owned and occupied by Mentor Graham, Lincoln's instructor in surveying. It is amply identified and papers of authentication have been presented to the National museum at Washington along with the relic. The wedge bears the initials "A. L." cut in the iron, and old neighbors, living at the time of the discovery, testified to its ownership, the maker of one affidavit stating that he saw Lincoln cut the initials. He was in a blacksmith shop in New Salem and asked the blacksmith to cut the letters, but the latter demurred, saying he was "no scholar." Lincoln then took the hammer and cold chisel and cut them himself.

There may be those who do not see the interest that attaches to this relic, but it is an article that beyond almost anything else marks in a material way the toilsome and humble beginning of a career that ended in a glory attained by few among the sons of men. Other and many relics of Lincoln's life yet exist—the cabin where he was born, the houses in which he lived later, his manuscripts and his words of wisdom in printed form; but houses decay and documents burn. His fame will live as long as the written history and the memory of man continue.

Lincoln the Man.

Lincoln stands apart as so great a figure that to many he seems invested with attributes that lift him out of the realm of the common man, as a saint ceases to be in touch with humanity. But he was of the common men, as well as of the great of earth.

Industrial Education Magazine

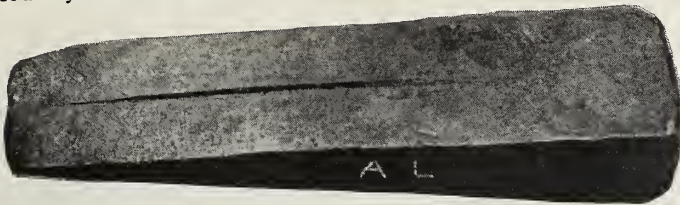
August, 1926.

IRON WEDGE USED BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In the May issue of the *Disston Crucible*, published by Henry Disston & Sons, Philadelphia, there appeared the following article. We have asked permission to reproduce it because there is so much interest at this time in almost anything connected with the life of Lincoln.

—Editors.

IN THE summer of 1830, Abraham Lincoln left home and went to Illinois where he hired out on his own account, wherever he could get a job in the new country into which he had gone. In that region of big farms and no fences Lincoln was needed. His stalwart arm and well-swung axe came well into play in cutting up logs for fences. He was called in that country a "rail-splitter."



IRON WEDGE USED BY LINCOLN IN WHICH HE CUT
HIS INITIALS

One of the first things he did when he struck out for himself was to split four hundred rails for every yard of "blue jeans" necessary to make him a pair of trousers.

In the U. S. National Museum at Washington is an interesting relic of those days. It is an iron wedge used by Abraham Lincoln for splitting wood and rails. On the surface of this wedge are the initials "A. L." cut by Lincoln himself.

This interesting personal relic of Lincoln was presented to the Smithsonian Institution by Henry W. Allen of California, thru Representative John A. Elston, of California, a regent of the Institution.

The wedge was found in 1885 while some repairs were being made on a brick house near New Salem, Menard County, Illinois, formerly owned and occupied by Mentor Graham, who was Lincoln's companion in surveying. In presenting the relic to the Institution, Mr. Allen included with it a number of papers of authentication, among them affidavits by Joseph Arnold and John Arnold, verifying the finding of the wedge in the Graham house, and affidavits by Lizzie H. Bell and John Q. Spears as to the positive identification of the object as the one known by them to have belonged to Lincoln.

Some interesting facts regarding the initials cut in the surface of the wedge are given in the affidavit of Mr. John Q. Spears, dated 1887. He says: "I distinctly recollect an occasion when I was in the blacksmith shop of one Joshua Miller, of the village of New Salem aforesaid, when Mr. Lincoln came into said blacksmith shop, and, after some conversation, asked Mr. Miller to cut his (Lincoln's) initials in an iron wedge which he, Lincoln, then held in his hand, to which Mr. Miller replied that he could not do it, as he was no scholar. Thereupon Mr. Lincoln said to said Miller: 'Let me have your

hammer and cold chisel and I will cut them myself.' Thereupon the aforesaid Miller gave to Mr. Lincoln the cold chisel and hammer and I stood by and saw Mr. Lincoln, with said hammer and cold chisel, cut and make the letters 'A. L.' upon said iron wedge. These facts are vividly impressed upon my memory."

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A. S.
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January 1936

The Reading Puddle Ball

Lincoln

*used this Genuine
Puddled Wrought
Iron Wedge in his
rail-splitting days*

Notice the initials "A.L." cut on this wedge by Lincoln himself.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, during his rail-splitting days, had excellent opportunity to judge the tough endurance of Genuine Puddled Wrought Iron. Here is the Genuine Puddled Wrought Iron wedge he used for splitting logs—a relic which, still hale and hearty, is preserved in the U. S. National Museum at Washington today.

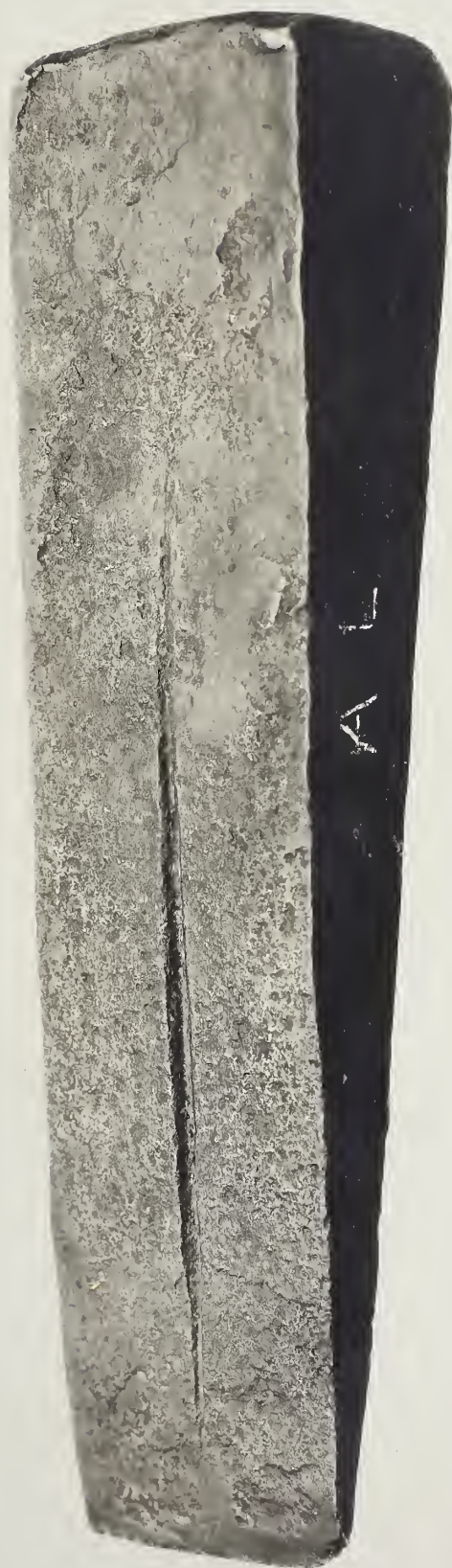
Workmen repairing the house of Mentor Graham, Lincoln's instructor in surveying, found the wedge in 1885. When presented to the Museum, the wedge was accompanied by a number of papers of authentication, among them affidavits by Joseph Arnold and John Arnold, verifying the discovery of the wedge in the Graham house. Affidavits were also secured from Lizzie H. Bell and John Hugh Spears, positively identifying the object as one known by them to have belonged to Lincoln.

In Mr. Spears' affidavit he says, "I distinctly recollect an occasion when I was in the blacksmith shop of Joshua Miller of New Salem aforesaid, when Mr. Lincoln came into said blacksmith shop, and, after some conversation, asked Mr. Miller to cut his initials on an iron wedge which Lincoln held in his hand, to which Mr. Miller



replied that he could not do it as he was no scholar. Thereupon Mr. Lincoln said to Mr. Miller, 'Let me have your hammer and cold chisel and I will cut them myself.' Thereupon Miller gave to Mr. Lincoln the cold chisel and hammer, and I stood by and saw Mr. Lincoln, with said hammer and cold chisel, cut and make the letters, 'A. L.' upon said wedge. These facts are vividly impressed upon my memory."

Science and Invention Have Never Found a Satisfactory Substitute for Genuine Puddled Wrought Iron



Wedge used by Lincoln. \$1.00

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